



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

December 2004

## FIND THE GALAXY JUST A CLICK AWAY

Reviewed by LIONEL MELANCON

If you don't have an icon of some distant planet and its moon with the words "Celestia," under it on your desktop, you're not cruising, at least not into the Universe or among out planets. Click on it and you're positioned some 31,897 km above planet Earth looking down on the Pacific Ocean. Your mouse lets you turn the globe keeping the sun and its moon all in sync. so you can look at the dark side of the planet, or its poles if you'd like. For that matter you can look at and tour any planet or sun in our galaxy. But first you need to download "Celestia," at [www.shatters.net/celestia](http://www.shatters.net/celestia).

I promise that if you do, you'll have a leg up on the folks who are willing to pay in excess of \$200,000 for a ride up to about 80 miles above the Earth.

According to an article in the Nov. 2004 issue of Discover: *Wanted: Space Tour Guides*, software 3-D graphics designer Chris Laurel took a year and a half sabbatical from Microsoft to participate in the design of "Celestia." Using, so called,

skins of NASA photographs, he was able to overlay a realistic surface on the planets you can fly by on your journey through the galaxy. And as you do, everything stays synchronized, shadows from suns, not even our own, cast light and shadow as they would in reality.

You don't take a comic journey, but travel through space to wherever you care to. You orbit planets or stars or moons, zoom through the Milky Way at whatever speed you choose.

Follow comets, or spacecraft, for that matter—hundreds of programmers from around the world are contributing to the site by making add-on files and have created a web site [www.celestiamotherlode.net](http://www.celestiamotherlode.net).

I could go on and on, or up and up, but I can only highly recommend these free download. If an old geezer like me can learn from this site, imagine what it would do for your grandkids.

### The President's Desk

Lionel Melancon [president@rvpcc.org](mailto:president@rvpcc.org)



Another year has swooshed by, and I hope you have enjoyed your membership and participation in the ROANOKE VALLEY PERSONEL COMPUTER CLUB as much as I have. Thanksgiving has gone by, and I hope you were all able to get together with your families and enjoy that day of thanks. It truly is, if you consider the turmoil that's taking place in so many parts of the world. I hope yours was Thankful.

And it's time for our Christmas Party, which will be history by the time you read this. I'll make a pitch at the party, but remind you now. If anyone knows of any good place for our Christmas party for next year please get the nominations in to Ernie at our Dec. 11 meeting. He wants to get

started working on getting a place ASAP.

While I'm at it, we all owe a debt of gratitude for the hard work Ernie, Azella and Tim put in trying to find a place for us this year. Just seems there are more groups trying for fewer places each year. A BIG Thanks to you from us.

Next meeting we'll have elections for new officers so if anyone would like to be a part of the cogs, (not the wheels) please get your names in just before the elections. WE REALLY DO NEED A SECRETARY!!! The job isn't demanding, I guess all one has to do is be able to take notes and pay attention. Guess if you tend to fall asleep during the meetings, you needn't apply.

Hope you all have a great Christmas coming up. And don't forget the reason for that special day.



ROANOKE VALLEY  
PERSONAL COMPUTER CLUB

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To:

**CAST YOUR BALLOT**  
**Voting takes place in December**

**Proposed Officers:**

**President --- Earl Abbott**  
**Vice President --- Ernest Arnett**  
**Secretary --- NEED**  
**Treasurer --- Azella Tingler**  
**Public Relations --- John Yates, Bill Scott**  
**Membership Chairman --- Del Kirschner,**  
**(Lionel Melançon to help)**  
**Web --- Tim Johnson**

**(Meets 2nd Satur-  
day of Month)**

**Next Meeting**  
Sat., Dec. 11  
**Place:** Arnold R. Burton  
Technology Center,  
Room 105, 1760  
Roanoke Boulevard,  
Salem, Va. 24153  
**Time:** 9:15 a.m. - noon

**RVPCC Officers—2004**

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